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## THE EVOLUTION OF NEGRO LABOR

Few questions now before the American people are of more general interest than that which relates to the rôle the negro is to play in the great industrial advance of the southern states. The purpose of this article is to explain the present situation in the light of its economic antecedents and to call attention to some of the factors which will in no small measure determine future development. That there is much in existing conditions both of encouragement and discouragement is patent to every careful observer. Unfortunately most of those discussing the questions close their eyes to one or the other set of facts and are wildly optimistic or pessimistic accordingly. As everyone has his standpoint, let me say that I agree with Dr. J. L. M. Curry, who states: "I have very little respect for the intelligence or the patriotism of the man who doubts the capacity of the negro for improvement or usefulness." The civilization of a race has taken place many times in the history of the world. How long it may take for any given people, or whether the development may be stopped by unpropitious conditions, no one can tell. It took the Germans hundreds of years to absorb the Roman culture, and the immoralities of the May Days were the despair of the Puritians almost a thousand years later. One trouble regarding the negro is that we have no standard for comparison. It may be that if we knew the rate of progress of other primitive peoples we should find his progress remarkable.

We know comparatively little about the ancestry of the American negroes. They came, originally, from the west coast of Africa, but it is not known how far into the interior the slave trade had extended. Western Africa was inhabited by many tribes, some of which were much superior to others. It is certain that Semitic blood had been infused into the more northern tribes. All these tribal distinctions, however, have been hopelessly lost in America and to increase the confusion no small amount of white blood has been added. The number and relative position of negroes as contrasted with mulattoes, etc., no one knows, and the census does not attempt to ascertain. The traveler through the South is impressed by the fact that the leaders in industry and education are not pure

negroes. It should be remembered that a black skin is no guarantee of the pure negro. Crossing with the whites may show itself in shape of skull and features as well as in color. While ethnologists may not yet predict the results of race mixture, it is safe to say that it is unscientific to use the achievements of a score of half-breeds as an index of what may be immediately expected of the original stock.

In Africa the negroes had established no enduring state. At the time when the slave trade was at its height the strong hill tribes of the East had been crowding the weaker tribes to the low west coast; slavery in its worst forms was universal and slave raids were known long before the advent of Europeans. Cannibalism was prevalent; religion a mass of grossest superstition, with power of life and death in the hands of the priests of the mystic rites of the Voodoo and Obea. The sexual passions were strongly developed. Marriage was a living together for a longer or shorter time. Life and property were in subjection to the chiefs, consequently very insecure. Wild animals were dangerous. The damp tropical climate made great provisions for the future unnecessary, not to say impossible, while social conditions did not favor the accumulation of property.

The transfer to America made a sharp break with the past. Simple dialects were exchanged for a complex language. Physical health was carefully safeguarded; life became more secure. An emphasis previously unknown was placed upon the permanence of marital relations. In return the negro, for the first time, was made to work. Admitting, as all do, that slavery was an economic mistake, from the negro's standpoint it conferred a great benefit by teaching him to work.<sup>1</sup> Booker Washington has said: "American slavery was a great curse to both races and I would be the last to apologize for it; but, in the presence of God, I believe that slavery laid the foundation for the solution of the problem that is now before us in the South. During slavery, the negro was taught every trade, every industry, that constitutes the foundation for making a living." Dr. H. B. Frissell of Hampton has borne the same testimony. "The southern plantation was really a great trade school, where thousands received instruction in mechanic arts, in agriculture, in cooking, sew-

<sup>1</sup> "The Future of the American Negro "

ing and other domestic occupations. Although it may be said that all this instruction was given from selfish motives, yet the fact remains that the slaves on many plantations had good industrial training, and all honor is due to the conscientious men and still more to the noble women of the South, who in slavery times helped to prepare the way for the better days that were to come." Work is the foundation of human progress. The people which has learned to work and which lives where work brings proportionate results has made a great start toward civilization. The advantages of the discipline of slavery are seen when the negro and the Indian are contrasted. Dr. Frissell says of this comparison: "When the children of these two races are placed side by side as they are in the school-rooms and workshops, and on the farms, at Hampton, it is not difficult to perceive that the training which the black had under slavery was far more valuable as a preparation for civilized life than the freedom from training and service enjoyed by the Indian on the western reservations. For while slavery taught the colored man to work, the reservation pauperized the Indian with free rations; while slavery brought the black into the closest relations with the white race and its ways of life, the reservation shut the Indian away from his white brothers and gave him little knowledge of their civilization, language or religion."

Under slavery three general fields of service opened to the blacks. The first, of the quickest and brightest, was that of the house and body servants. These were constantly in the houses and with their masters and absorbed, as did the next class, no small amount of learning. The second class, consisting of men alone, comprised the artisans, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths and the like. In large parts of the South these had practical monopoly of the trades. In technical knowledge; they, of course, soon outstripped their masters and became, as compared with other slaves, independent and self-reliant. The significance of this training appeared in the generation after freedom was declared. The third and largest class embraced the field hands. To this class were naturally consigned the dullest as well as those whose services were not elsewhere needed. Some of these became foremen, but the vast majority worked on tasks directly under the eye of overseers. As a rule, the methods of agriculture were crude; tools, usually heavy clumsy hoes, were of the simplest; even plows were unknown in some districts until long after the war.

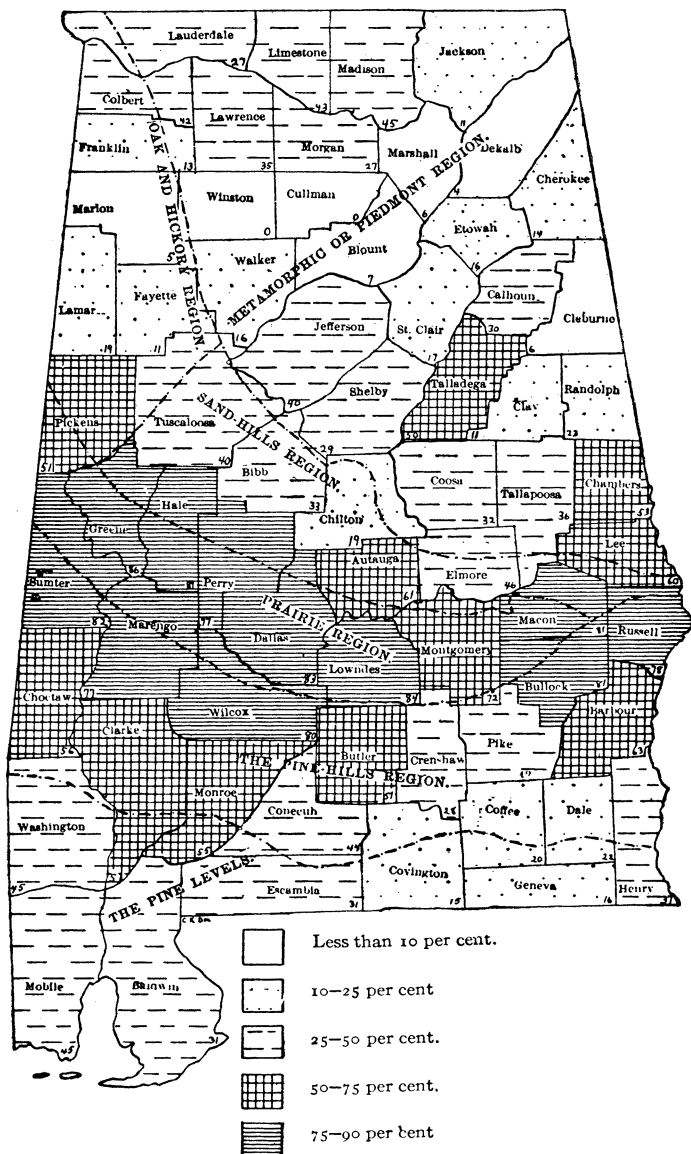
Within the past year I have seen grass being cut with hoes. The soil was cultivated for a time then abandoned for new land. Corn, cotton and in a few districts rice, were the chief crops, although each plantation raised its own fruit and vegetables and about the cabins in the quarters were often little garden patches. Slavery, however, like Africa, gave the negro little training in independence, in responsibility for propriety, in thrift and foresight for the morrow. All things were the master's and he had to replace old tools, furnish a sufficiency of food and clothes, and be responsible for the whole. Thus, neither Africa nor America had trained the bulk of the negroes to any sense of personal responsibility away from the eye of the manager. Moreover, there had been nothing of home life with all that this means in the development of a race.

Freedom came, a second sharp break with old economic conditions. There was now no one to provide the necessities of life. But the negro can labor and the white must employ his labor. Gradually new relationships are worked out.

It is often assumed that slavery laid a black deposit of equal depth over the South. This assumption is incorrect. There are sections of the South where the whites knew and know as little about the blacks as do the average northerners. The economic causes which made slavery unprofitable at the North fixed its location in the South. The centre of slavery moved, therefore, south and west. Even before the war, Kentucky and Virginia had become largely breeding states and slave labor less and less profitable. The least desirable slaves were sold south, the best retained even when economically unprofitable, because of family pride. For this reason, perhaps, the Virginia negroes have often been considered the best of the race. At the outbreak of the war the alluvial districts of the lower Mississippi were probably the most prosperous of the slave regions. Since the war other causes, such as the attraction of northern cities, have conspired to make the rate of increase among negroes in the northern slave states lower than that of the whites. What this means to the economic life of a state is seen when we learn that in 1860 negroes were in a majority in five counties of Maryland, in but two in 1900; in forty-three counties of Virginia in 1860, and thirty-five in 1900, while sixty counties out of the one hundred showed an actual decrease of negro population between 1890-1900.

ALABAMA.

NEGRO PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION, 1900.



In North Carolina in 1860 nineteen counties were black, fifteen in 1900.

For the sake of showing the location of the negro population to-day, Alabama is taken as a typical state. Other states are equally interesting. The map on page 59 shows the various agricultural districts of the state and the shading indicates the relation of the negro population to the whole. The heavy negro percentage is seen to lie in the black prairie belt, with a fair average along the Tennessee River. The only other counties in the metamorphic region showing any considerable percentage are Jefferson, in which Birmingham with its surrounding mines and furnaces offers plenty of work for unskilled labor, and Talledega, which has besides some mines a good deal of valley land and is a good cotton county. The poor land of the sand hills roughly separates the whites from the negroes. To the north the fields are tilled by whites, to the south by negroes. Along the Tennessee there are many negro farmers. In two counties, Winston and Collman, it will be seen that the census records only twenty-eight negroes. The explanation is that negroes are not allowed there and it is interesting to note that in this district the dominant element is that of Germans, who emigrated from Ohio since the war. The records show that six counties in north Alabama lost in negro population and two others were stationary during the last decade, while in the black belt the whites have decreased in four counties and are stationary in two others. It will be noted that negroes are in a minority in the pine flats district. This is true in other states. From 1890-1900 the negroes lost relatively in the metamorphic and sand hills districts, were stationary in the prairie and gained slightly in the oak hills, and more heavily in the pine woods. This statement is based on an examination of five or six typical counties lying almost wholly within each of the regions named.

This segregation of the negroes is found in all the states in a more or less marked degree. With a fairly dense population on the immediate seacoast of the Atlantic, the bulk is found from southeastern Virginia through eastern Mississippi, along the line of the pine hills and black prairie of Alabama, swinging north with this prairie as it enters Mississippi. Only the border of the metamorphic region is encroached upon. The negroes are again in the majority in the alluvial districts of the Mississippi and Red Rivers.

In Texas, though seldom preponderating, they are located chiefly in the oak and hickory lands, which run from the northeast corner, southwest through the centre of the state.

Wherever in the South a heavy negro population is found outside of what we may call the black belt, it may be accounted for by the presence of some city or by the development of some local industry giving employment to numbers of unskilled laborers. Thus, the counties in Virginia which are gaining heavily in negro population are those about Norfolk, Newport News and Richmond. In Mississippi the delta is the seat of an increasing black population. In many sections the negroes are leaving the hills for the more fertile bottom lands. Previous to 1884, only the lands immediately adjacent to the rivers in this district could be cultivated, now the railroads are penetrating every part of it. Meantime the levee system is lessening the danger of floods. Arkansas shows a similar, but slower, development. Oklahoma and the Indian Territory in the west and Florida in the east have attracted many negroes. Numbers have also gone to the coal field of West Virginia. The trend to northern cities has been mentioned.

The significance of this geographical segregation and the movement of the negro population is often overlooked, and this may lead to very great misconceptions regarding actual conditions. On page 419 of Volume VI, Census 1900, we learn that the negro landowner and cash tenant produced almost as much cotton per acre as did white owners and tenants and that in Mississippi the negro tenants actually produced more per acre than white tenants. Are we to infer that they are better farmers than the whites, or do these facts "denote remarkable progress," as the census informs us? By no means. In Mississippi the whites farm the hill country, the delta is cultivated only by negroes and the delta land will raise twice as much cotton per acre as the hills. No wonder the negroes' crops are larger. Moreover, the negro owner and cash tenant are not independent of the white man. Nearly all of them receive advances from white factors, who personally or through their "riders" visit their debtors and give instructions as to the cultivation of the crops. If these instructions are not followed the advances stop. If we are to base our estimates of the negro upon such facts we may as well argue that the negro owners are poorer farmers than negro tenants, for the same table shows that in nearly every state the tenants raise



more per acre than do the owners. The explanation, in part at least, is that the tenants are probably under closer supervision of the white planter.

This segregation brings up other questions. Why does Dr. Paul Barringer, of Virginia, find that race hostility is increasing, while Mr. A. H. Stone, of Greenville, Mississippi, says that their problem is "how to get more negroes"? What is the significance of the fact that there is least race friction in districts in which the negro is relatively most numerous? Why do lynchings and assaults upon white women seem largely confined to regions in which the negro is least numerous? What does this segregation mean for the future of the negro? Professor DuBois has noted a difference in cities. "Savannah is an old city, where the class of masters among the whites and of trained and confidential slaves among the negroes formed an exceptionally large part of the population. The result has been unusual good feeling between the races and the entrance of negroes into all walks of industrial life with little or no opposition. Atlanta, on the other hand, is quite opposite in character. Here the poor whites from north Georgia, who neither owned slaves nor had any acquaintance with negro character, have come into contact and severe competition with the blacks. The result has been intense race feeling." What does it signify that the prosperous section of Alabama is the north, in which whites predominate, while in Mississippi power seems to be concentrating in the alluvial regions in which the negroes are in the majority? Yet again, the manufacturing which are springing up in the South are moving westward along the hills of the Piedmont and have scarcely affected the life of the negro. Is he to have no part in this save as unskilled laborer? Certainly here is a field for study which has as yet been little worked. The influence which this segregation has upon the school opportunities of the negro should not be overlooked.

This geographical segregation naturally has greatest significance for the farmers, who comprise some 85 per cent of the negro men in productive pursuits and 44 per cent of the women, for city conditions are everywhere more or less similar. The land occupied by negro farmers may be divided into several districts: (1) Virginia and Kentucky north of the line of profitable cotton culture; (2) the Atlantic coast; (3) the pine flats and hills which sweep westward around the Piedmont to central Mississippi; the black prairie of Ala-

bama and eastern Mississippi and the oak woods of Alabama and Mississippi; (4) the alluvial regions of the Mississippi and Red Rivers; (5) prairies of Texas.

1. In Kentucky negroes cultivate only about 4.8 per cent of the farms and in Virginia only 26.7. As has been noted, there seems to be an exodus from these farming sections. Cotton is no longer profitable and the tobacco industry seems to be concentrating in the hands of the whites. These Virginia lands have been greatly reduced in value in recent years and many have passed into the hands of negroes, perhaps because no one else wanted them. Farm hands get from six to ten dollars per month.

2. The sea coast region offers peculiar facilities for gaining an easy livelihood. In the northern section (Virginia) there has been a great development of the oyster industry, the negro oystermen making about \$8.00 per month and families occupied in shucking oysters earning up to \$400.00 per year, three-fourths gaining less than \$250.00. Berry picking occupies much time in the early summer. The work is not continuous as on the farm and is accordingly preferred.<sup>2</sup> In the southern portion along the islands of Carolina and Georgia the streams abound in fish and crabs. The climate is warm. There are some rice plantations and cotton is of the Sea Island variety. The day laborer gets from \$0.35 to \$0.50 on the farm; \$0.75 or so in the phosphate industry. This latter is declining and the negroes who left the farms to go into it are drifting to the cities. Land is abundant and cheap. In some places a negro can rent all he wants for \$10.00 per year, it being taken for granted that he will not use more than ten acres and \$1.00 being a general rent. The farmer gets advances of from \$35.00 to \$50.00 per year. The rice planters say it is harder and harder to get laborers.

3. In this section are grouped several different soils, but they are about equally adapted to cotton, the prairie soil being the best probably, and are under similar conditions of rainfall. The soils are light and easily tilled. They wash badly and have suffered greatly from improper tillage. The introduction of artificial fertilizers has enabled them to keep up a competition with the newer and better soils of the West. On the whole, however, it seems to be a losing game for the negro. To produce cotton successfully requires

<sup>2</sup>See Negroes of Litwalton, Va. Bulletin Department of Labor, No. 37.

an expenditure of \$1.75 to \$2.00 an acre for fertilizer and this the negro often fails to appreciate. The result is that in most of this district the negroes are not progressing as they might. Professor DuBois says: "A good season with good prices regularly sent a number out of debt and made them peasant proprietors; a bad season either in weather or prices still means the ruin of a thousand black homes. The industrial awakening of Georgia has tended to send up the rent of the farming lands, while at the same time the crop-lien system, being especially suited to a non-perishable crop like cotton, checks and often absolutely forbids diversity in agriculture and thus gives the 'unearned increment' almost entirely to the whites." Professor DuBois gives the record of a year for 271 families as follows:<sup>3</sup>

*Year 1898—Price of Cotton Low.*

Bankrupt and sold out .....	3
\$100 or more in debt .....	61
\$25 to \$100 in debt .....	54
\$1 to \$25 in debt .....	47
Cleared nothing .....	53
Cleared \$1 to \$25 .....	27
Cleared \$25 to \$100 .....	21
Cleared \$100+ .....	5
	<hr/>
	271

In this district "one-mule farms," *i. e.*, thirty to forty acres prevail, the rent ranging from \$2.00 to \$4.00 per acre. The average amount of advances secured is from \$50.00 to \$75.00, a good profit being paid on all goods and high interest on the total advanced. In 1900 a typical family of three adults and three children, owning a mule and two cows, leasing fifty acres of land, not all in cultivation, secured the following advances:

Balance, January 1, 1900 .....	\$0 50
Cash .....	9 00
Clothing .....	9 79
Feed for stock .....	11 50
Provisions .....	13 48
Tobacco .....	80
Tools .....	40
Interest and recording fee (\$1.00) .....	5 77
	<hr/>
	\$51 24

<sup>3</sup> See Bulletin Department of Labor, No. 35.

Advances are based on number of working hands. They begin about February and stop in August. The family must get along as best it can in the interim.

The balance of his money was spent elsewhere and he must have come out about even, as on January 1, 1901, he owed the planter about \$4.00. The plow and hoes, etc., needed by the farmer cost not to exceed \$3.00. Really a large part of the interest should be charged to "wages of superintendence," as the merchant has learned that if he wants his money he must himself, or by men called "riders," keep in constant touch with his debtors to see that the crops are cultivated. The negro knows how to raise cotton, but he may neglect to plow his field unless reminded. As is well known, the crop is mortgaged in advance, for few negroes are able to advance themselves. A dishonest creditor will manage to get about all the crop. This fact, combined with the necessity for raising cotton to meet the mortgage requirements and the lower price of cotton, has done much to discourage the farmer in this district and to drive the young people away from the farm. To these causes should be added the fact that few negroes raise their own supply of vegetables and are, therefore, compelled to buy. All plant gardens but few take care of them. The last catalogue of Tuskegee states: "If they have any garden at all it is apt to be choked with weeds and other noxious growths. With every advantage of soil and climate, and with a steady market, if they live near any city or large town, few of the colored farmers get any benefit from this, one of the most profitable of all industries." In a word, in the great trucking industry the negroes bear little part. Field hands get about \$0.50 per day and find themselves. A diversified agriculture would greatly improve the situation, but for this he is not prepared. In poor years large numbers seek temporary work on the railroads or in the cities. The planters say the old men, women and girls are their most steady workers.

4. The alluvial lands. These may be subdivided into the cotton in the north and the cane districts in the south. In the cotton district we come upon a very different condition of affairs. The cabins are better. Land rents from \$5.00 to \$8.00 per acre and the average amount tilled by a family does not exceed twenty acres. The average advances range from \$100 to \$150 per year. They are continued as long as is necessary. Wages range from \$0.60 to \$0.75 per

day, and during cotton-picking time \$1.50 upwards is often made. In 1900 a family of five adults and two children (under fourteen) came into the delta of Mississippi. They had nothing, not even decent clothing. In 1901 they cultivated thirty acres of land on which they raised twenty-seven bales of cotton. They now own a wagon and farm implements, two mules, pigs and chickens. Their plantation account in 1901 was as follows :

<i>Debit.</i>		<i>Credit.</i>	
Doctor .....	\$35 35	Cotton .....	\$1,091 28
Clothes and rations .....	284 10	Cotton seed .....	196 00
Mule .....	77 00		
Feed .....	5 00		
Extra labor (on their place) ..	67 60		
Ginning .....	101 25		
Rent .....	175 50		
Cash .....	290 00		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$1,035 80		\$1,287 28

This left them a balance of nearly \$250. This family is composed of good workers, but they are by no means exceptional. I wish I could add that the negroes in this district were saving their money, but I fear most of them waste their earnings. In fact they often squander as much as families in the eastern districts earn. Of course there are many exceptions. Yet in spite of the opportunities planters find it difficult to get all the cotton picked. The average family can pick all they raise but they do not—hence a heavy charge for extra labor and this labor is often hard to get. The work must be carefully watched if it is to be well done. If the attempt is made to improve the cotton by taking special pains to secure certain seed, as like as not it will develop that some enterprising renter has mixed in a lot of poor stuff obtained elsewhere. In this region also wood is free and tenants often have free pasturage for stock.

The situation varies in the cane and rice country as here the planters pay cash wages for all labor. Houses with garden plots, firewood, etc., are furnished. The wages run from \$.40 per day for women to \$.70 for men, during cultivation, rising during the grinding season to \$.75 for women and \$1.00 to \$1.25 for men, children, of course, receiving less. On cane plantations there is work the year round, but there is great difficulty in getting regular labor. All work

is done under careful supervision of overseers. The average yearly returns seem to be less than in the cotton country. One family of which I have record, the working force consisting of father, son (with a little assistance from two small children) earned, in 1901, \$382.54. The man owns a horse and buggy, lives and dresses well and has money stored away. Wages are usually paid by an order on the store, which must be cashed if negro has no account. The men seldom work more than five and one-half days per week, hence arose the custom of paying off every eleven days. The planter never knows how many laborers he will have on Monday and it is said to be difficult to get extra work done even at higher wages. On one plantation, in 1901, an effort was made to get the cane cut at so much per ton. Higher wages were offered and the men could make \$1.15, women, \$1.00 per day. After a week or so the hands asked to return to the gang at \$1.00 and \$0.75 per day, as they disliked the extra exertion. Negroes have had little to do with the development of the rice industry of southern Louisiana. Along the river some rice is raised, usually in connection with other crops. The rice season is short and other labor must be found if this is the sole crop.

The last district is found in the prairie regions of Texas. I have never visited this district and can get only hearsay evidence, which tends to show that the negroes are more prosperous than in most sections of the east. I make, therefore, no special mention of this state.

These six regions offer very diverse opportunities. The development is bound to be varied. We may, therefore, reasonably expect that the progress of the negro will not be at equal rate in the different sections and will follow very different lines. Enough has been said to indicate that in some districts the present situation is not specially favorable, while in others a surplus results from present labors. It is not in place to discuss the crop-lien system, etc., at length, but it may be said in passing that this system, bad as many of its features are, offers to the poor man an opportunity to at once start in and receive his supplies until the crop is made. He pays a big interest but the security is not good and it must be remembered that the white man pays big interest at the South and gets his money only under onerous conditions. The necessity of receiving advances greatly handicaps any development of diversified farming. In all sections the great criticism on the farm laborer may be summed up

in "unreliability." Mr. Alfred Holt Stone<sup>4</sup> says: "One of the traits which militates most against the negro here is his unreliability. His mental processes are past finding out and he cannot be counted on to do or not to do a given thing under given circumstances. There is scarcely a planter in all this territory who would not gladly make substantial concessions for an assured tenantry." Agriculture is becoming more and more scientific. The lessening price of the great staple, whose culture the negro understands, makes more necessary the practice of small economies. Is he in a position to exercise these? Regarding the negro farmer let me quote from a bulletin of the Farmers' Improvement Society of Texas: "Very many" (colored farmers) "in the first place do not try to make their supplies at home. Very often much is lost by bad fences. Lots of them don't know where their hoes, plows, singletrees, etc., are this minute. Lots of them buy butter, peas, beans, lard, meat and hay . . . well really, to sum up, if there's anything like scientific methods among the vast majority of our people I don't know it. . . . I venture to say that not one negro farmer in a hundred ever saw the back of one of these bulletins (agricultural), much less the inside." The need of some instruction which will enable the negro to take advantage of his agricultural environment and get the most out of it is apparent. In the opinion of many observers, the negro has a better chance on the farm than in any other occupation. The opportunity is almost endless. The South is not densely populated and thousands of acres of land lie idle either because of lack of workers or lack of intelligence to make them yield good returns. The negro has every opportunity to secure these lands either at fair price or rental and because of the system of advances may get a start when the white man at the North must work for a long time at wages to save enough to do his own advancing. I can but feel personally that the farm offers the mass of the negroes their opportunity, although for years to come it may be that their work must be under the close supervision of the white man. That appreciation of the value of constant labor and of the necessity for that "reliability" already mentioned as lacking, will be gained here if anywhere. But I am anticipating.

We have seen that besides being taught agriculture, the slave was trained in domestic service and in the mechanic arts. What is the situation a generation after freedom? In domestic service the

<sup>4</sup>The Negro in the Mississippi Delta, American Economic Association.

negro has maintained a monopoly in the districts in which he is numerous and in most of the towns and cities. Fifty-two per cent of the women in productive employments are servants. The average servant (female) receives from \$4.00 to \$8.00 per month and board, good cooks occasionally getting \$12.00 to \$15.00. The servant never sleeps in the house but lodges either in a small separate cabin or, more often, at home. The development of the towns has brought large numbers of girls from the country to act as servants. The practice of sleeping outside the houses where they are employed during the day subjects them to many temptations and is an unfortunate element of the situation. The quality of the service, judging from the almost unanimous consensus of opinion, is deteriorating. The children are not trained in the home and do not get elsewhere the training they receive under slavery. The evil is again, unreliability. Their competence is often unquestioned after a period of service, but little reliance can be placed in them. It is interesting to note that northern women who go south filled with the idea that the negro is abused usually have very great difficulty in keeping any servants at all during the first year or so of their stay.

The old custom of slavery, that whatever is left from the master's table goes to the cabins, is still adhered to and every housewife expects to feed the family of the servant. Those engaging two servants often try to get them from one family for obvious reasons. Within a week a friend of the writer in Philadelphia discovered that her girl's husband was being regularly fed from her larder. The servants come in the morning, leave in the afternoon and in some places will not return to get supper. When this is the custom the housewife is helpless unless extra wages solve the difficulty. During the summer, when there is a chance to get odd sums by picking berries and the like, servants are hard to obtain, "Ise restin'" being the response to would-be employers. Writing of Virginia conditions Professor DuBois has said: "There is considerable dissatisfaction over the state of domestic service. The negroes are coming to regard the work as a relic of slavery and as degrading and only enter it from sheer necessity and then as a temporary make-shift. The servants receiving less than they think they ought are often careful to render as little for it as possible. They grow to despise the menial work they do partly because their employers



themselves despise it and teach their daughters to do the same. Employers, on the other hand, find an increasing number of careless and impudent young people, who neglect their work and in some cases show vicious tendencies and demoralize the children of the family. . . . One result of this situation is the wholesale emigration of the better class of servants to the north."<sup>5</sup> Male servants get from \$8.00 to \$15.00 per month. The old body servants naturally became barbers, waiters, restaurant keepers, etc., under the new régime.

The negro artisan, as we have seen, had control of the situation in 1865. It must be admitted that this is no longer the case. Bruce<sup>6</sup> says: "Indeed one of the most discouraging features in the character of the negroes who have grown up since the war is their extreme aversion to the mechanical trades. . . . The explanation of this antipathy on their part is easily found: such pursuit constrains them to conform more closely than they like to a steady routine of work, which is more arduous and trying on the whole. . . . Above all the laborer is not tied down to one spot; if he grows weary of one locality he can find occupation elsewhere. But this is not the position of the young mechanic; his success is largely dependent upon his remaining in one place; he secures patronage by winning a reputation for assiduity and skill in his trade, and it is not possible to earn such a reputation as long as he yields to his inclination to wander." Booker T. Washington, than whom none could give more valuable testimony, says in "The Future of the American Negro:" "The place made vacant by the old colored man, who was trained as a carpenter during slavery and who since the war had been the leading contractor and builder in the southern town, had to be filled. No young colored carpenter, capable of filling his place, could be found. The result was that his place was filled by a white mechanic from the North, or from Europe or from elsewhere. What is true of carpentry and house building in this case is true, in a degree, in every skilled occupation; and it is becoming true of common labor. I do not mean to say that all skilled labor has been taken out of the negroes' hands; but I do mean to say that in no part of the South is he so strong in the matter of skilled labor as he was twenty years ago, except possibly in the country districts and the smaller towns. In the more

<sup>5</sup> Negroes of Farmville Bulletin Department of Labor, January, 1898.

<sup>6</sup> The Plantation Negro as Freedman.

northern of the southern cities, such as Richmond and Baltimore, the change is most apparent; and it is being felt in every southern city. Whenever the negro has lost ground industrially in the South, it is not because there is a prejudice against him as a skilled laborer on the part of the native southern white man; the southern white man generally prefers to do business with the negro mechanic rather than with a white one, because he is accustomed to do business with the negro in this respect. There is almost no prejudice against the negro in the South in the matter of business, so far as the native whites are concerned; and here is the entering wedge for the solution of the negro problem. But too often, where the white mechanic or factory operative from the North gets a hold, the trades union soon follows, and the negro is crowded to the wall." Quotations and observations to the same effect might be multiplied indefinitely. As a rule the negro works for less wages than the white in the same trade. His standard of life is also lower. Negro carpenters and bricklayers receive from \$1.00 to \$2.50 per day, with an average, perhaps, of \$1.50. The quality of the work is generally inferior in common estimation. The negro working under white direction usually does better work than one alone. A man who has been intimately associated with negroes all his life, Rev. J. L. Tucker, Baton Rouge, La., writes as follows on this point: "A large school house was recently built here . . . all the digging and preparation of ground was done by gangs of negro men under white bosses. The mortar was mixed, lime and sand and bricks hauled by negroes. A white man gave to negroes the exact proportions of ingredients for the cement, cement mortar and mortar for the different parts of the building, watched it done for a while, then went his way and the negro did that work, but the white man came back every now and then to make sure. That negro has been mixing mortar for many years, yet could not be entirely trusted. On the walls of the building were white men and negroes side by side, laying brick; but every piece of nice work was done by the white men. Straight work done by line and plumb the negroes could do, but the arches were turned, pilasters, sills, window recesses, etc., done by white men or quadroons; they could not be trusted to negroes. Let a negro build you a chimney and your house will probably burn down unless you stand over him and *make* him fill all the cracks with mortar. He may have been told a hundred times; he may have seen a house burn down by

his faulty chimney, yet he will not do his work as it ought to be done and as he knows how unless you stand over him. . . . Negroes nailed up the lathing without much supervision. Negroes did the plastering, but white men laid on the 'hard finish.' In my own house in one room the white plaster finish has largely peeled off from the mortar plastering underneath. A couple of negroes were left to finish that room. They knew how, that is, they had worked side by side with white men all their lives and had been told, and been made to do it, a white man prompting, hundreds of times; yet, left alone, did it wrong. . . . They are good helpers, usually docile, proud of their work, and doing good work when told each separate thing, and told again each time it is done." If it be said that testimony from southern whites is prejudiced, a quotation from a letter of a northern man now resident in the South and employing negro labor may be cited: "I am convinced of one thing and that is that there is no dependence to be put in 90 per cent of the negro laborers, if left to themselves and out of an overseer's sight." In my own observations I saw little discrimination because of color, much because of inability to get competent negroes.

As was suggested in the quotation from Mr. Bruce, the trades and the farm have been dropped for all sorts of unskilled labor, particularly in the cities, not only because of greater opportunities but for the social advantages. In every town the ranks of the unskilled are overflowing. Thus has arisen the problem of the negro criminal from this mass of semi-idle men. Many indeed are supported by wives or mistresses and spend their time "lookin' for a job." Yet objection to work, to hard work under trying conditions, if it be not the steady day in and day out grind, the negro has little. America cannot show a happier, more cheerful body of laborers than these blacks doing odd jobs about the city, diving for phosphate rocks in the rivers of South Carolina, unloading fruit steamers at Mobile, working on the levees of the Mississippi, lumbering in the pine woods of south Alabama or digging coal about Birmingham. Free and easy, careless of the morrow, with tempers of children, angry in a moment yet cherishing no revenge; sullen and surly if they feel abused; working for ten to fifteen cents per hour, seventy-five cents to a dollar a day; preferring to work three days and play four; the last cent gambled if opportunity offers—an aimless, drifting life with nothing saved for old age—they are the typical unskilled

laborer of the South. The cotton of the best lands often is wasted because of lack of pickers. On the wharves of Mobile there is never any scarcity of laborers—the magic of the city which has caused trouble in some northern agricultural districts.

I am not arguing the question whether this oft-mentioned unreliability is the result of a lowering of the negro's standard or the rising standard of the white. It may be that in this respect, in quality of workmanship, in knowledge and self-control, there has really been progress. I have simply tried to show that, judged by the needs and demands of the present, the negro is still decidedly lacking. Personally, I am not surprised at this. I should be astonished if conditions were otherwise. The trouble is that most of us at the North are unable to disabuse ourselves of the idea that the negro is a Yankee with a dark skin. Therefore, we think that if all is not as it should be that some one must be keeping him back, some force restraining him. We accuse the southern white man, attribute the trouble to slavery. Something *is keeping him back* but it is his inheritance from thousands of years in Africa, not the southern white man nor slavery. It is my observation that the southern white in the negro belt will deal with the negro more patiently and gently and endure far more of shiftless methods than the average northerner would tolerate for a day. Of course there are exceptions—few in number—who say, as did a lumber man in Alabama last summer: "I never have any trouble with the negro. Have worked them for twenty years. Why—I haven't had to kill one yet, tho' I did shoot one once, but I used fine shot and it didn't hurt him much." On the other hand I have seen men enduring and taking for granted a quality of service which made me writhe in agony. We have attempted to hasten natural progress and are impatient at the seeming meagreness of results. Compare the negro of to-day with the negro in Africa and what a contrast there is!

Judging the average negro by our standards we find him suffering under some serious disabilities. Gross immorality—indulgence in which is seldom a bar to active church membership—bigamy, adultery and similar offences seldom are heard in the courts; venereal disease widespread. Marriage, a mating of more or less permanence, often without any ceremony, while divorce is equally informal. Crime and insanity increasing. Home life primitive—no regular meals nor common family interests. Children allowed to grow,

receiving neither at home nor in the average school any training in neatness, punctuality, obedience and industry. A people to whom time is no object. A church service advertised at 11.00 may begin at 12.30. Great lack of foresight; as economists say, an over-appreciation of present goods. Lack of thrift—the list is too long already. To his credit we find a personal devotion to one whom he trusts which is faithfulness itself. During war time the families of the soldiers were well cared for. One of the most disastrous results of the years following the war was the alienation to so large a degree of the former masters and slaves. The negro respects and trusts the white as he does not a fellow negro. It would be a happy day for the negro if the white woman of the South should again take a personal interest in his welfare. Greatly to his credit also is the willingness to work, and work hard under white leadership. Slavery taught him to work, but as a race he is not yet ready to work alone and get the best results. In his favor also is that friendliness on the part of the white man, which leads him to prefer the negro as a workman under ordinary conditions. It must be remembered that the succeeding generations will be less moved by this sentiment and will base their preferences on quality of workmanship.

Another factor in the problem which is growing in importance is that of white immigration. Into many southern communities is setting a tide of immigration from the North. White barbers, carpenters, masons, cooks are making their presence felt. In agriculture the negro has experienced little competition. Yet the rice industry of Louisiana has been revolutionized within a decade. In "The Cotton Plant" (p. 242), Mr. Harry Hammond states that in thirty-nine counties of Texas in the Black Prairie region in which whites predominate, the average value of land per acre is \$12.19, as against \$6.40 per acre in twelve counties of similar soil in Alabama in which negroes are in a majority. He says further: "The number and variety of implements recently introduced in cotton culture here, especially in the prairies of Texas, is very much greater than elsewhere in the cotton belt." What will be the result when the white farmer seeking cheap land discovers (as he is slowly) that he can live and work in the richest soil in the country, perhaps—the alluvial regions of the Mississippi River? To-day over 80 per cent of the population is negro; will he be fit to hold his own or must he either surrender the best land or take a subordinate position?

As Dr. Curry has said: "It may be assumed that the industrial problem lies at the heart of the whole situation which confronts us. Into our public and other schools should be incorporated industrial training. If to regularity, punctuality, silence, obedience to authority, there be systematically added instruction in mechanical arts, the results would be astounding." The question of classical education does not now concern us. The absolutely essential thing for the negro now is that he learn to work regularly and intelligently. The lesson begun in slavery must be fully mastered. As Dr. E. G. Murphy puts it: "The industrial training supplied by that school (slavery) is now denied to him. The capacity, the equipment and the necessity for work which slavery provided are the direct causes of the moral superiority of the old-time dorky. Is freedom to have no substitute for the ancient school? . . . The demand of the situation is not less education but more education of the right sort."

A great trouble with the mass of schools for negroes is that they have not fitted their pupils to teach the things upon which the negro's progress depends. Hampton and Tuskegee are attempts in the right direction. That they are being duplicated on smaller scales in many districts is a hopeful sign. The state institutions such as the school at Westside, Miss., and Normal, Ala., are not to be forgotten.

If agriculture offer the best field for the negro, it is a matter of regret that greater headway is not being made in the training of farmers. The training on the average farm is not sufficient, particularly in those districts where a departure from the traditional crops seems to be imperative. Even Tuskegee is not doing as much in this line as generally supposed, in spite of the emphasis I know is being laid upon it. In examining their last catalogue I find only sixteen graduates who are farming and of these thirteen have other occupations—principally teaching. Three others are introducing cotton raising in Africa under the German government. From the industrial department nine have received certificates in agriculture and six in dairying, but their present occupations are not given. Asking a prominent man at the Tuskegee Institute for the reason he exclaimed, rather disgustedly, that they didn't like to work and preferred teaching. Tuskegee is yielding great influence through its yearly Farmer's Conference and the smaller local association which meets monthly. There is a similar organization at Calhoun,

Ala., which has just held a fair, the exhibitors being negro farmers. At both Calhoun and Tuskegee and a few other places land has been purchased in large tracts and is being sold to the negroes at reasonable terms. It is too early to judge of the results of these experiments. In Texas there is an interesting organization, The Farmers' Improvement Society, which is composed of negroes. The aim is to stimulate the members to improve their homes, buy land, overcome the custom of receiving advances and to have a distributing co-operative society. A fair is held each year. From the *Galveston News* of October 12, 1902, I learn that the Society has about 3,000 members and that they own 50,000 acres of land, more than 8,000 head of cattle and 7,000 head of cattle and mules. If the figures are correct they indicate progress. The Hampton Building and Loan Association has been very successful and pays its stockholders 7 per cent dividends.

Mr. Joseph A. Tillinghast in closing his chapter on Industrial Progress ("The Negro in Africa and America") sums up as follows: "The general conclusion we reach, then, is to this effect, that an overwhelming majority of the race in its new struggle for existence under the exacting conditions of American industry is seriously handicapped by inherited characteristics. Economic freedom has not developed a sense of responsibility and a persistent ambition to rise, as many hoped to see. As a race the negroes are still wanting in energy, purpose and stability; they are giving away before the able competition of whites in the skilled and better paid occupations, and they fail to husband resources so as to establish economic safety." I think this a fair statement of the facts of the case. If I have indicated some of the lines along which there has been development and the conditions limiting further progress, I am content. Regarding the future, I am hopeful.

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